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Where Was the Garden of Eden?

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Abstract: This article argues that the garden of Eden was located in or near present-day Independence, Missouri.

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ci. *Where Was the Garden of Eden?*

ADAM and Eve, the progenitors of the human race, were placed by God in the "Garden of Eden."

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:8-9.)

This very brief statement would lead the reader to believe that Eden may have been the name of a large area of land, perhaps a country or continent, in which a garden of limited area was set aside and "planted" for the use of Adam and Eve.

For many generations Bible students have searched for the location of this home of our first parents. The geography of every continent has been studied minutely in the hope that the location of Eden and its garden might be found. Articles, pamphlets, and books have been written on the subject, but without acceptable conclusions.

The clues that might lead to a discovery are few. The account says that the garden was "eastward" in Eden. What is east or west in such a story depends on the place of the author at the time of writing, since no fixed point is mentioned. It is a fair assumption that the word "eastward" has quite another meaning, so far unknown, than the usual one of direction.

Another clue, which at first promised more, is the statement that

. . . a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison . . . which compasseth the whole land of Havilah . . . ; the name of the second river is Gihon . . . that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel . . . which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14.)

Despite the apparently specific descriptions given, this clue has not led to the location of the Garden of Eden. Careful scholars have not been able to identify any of the four rivers with certainty. None of the rivers mentioned fits into the lands now known. Since the historically well-known names of Euphrates, Assyria, and Ethiopia do not fit into the use of them in the Garden of Eden story, it is more than probable that they are ancient names variously applied in later times. Clearly, these rivers and countries belong to early ages of the world's history, and do not apply to present-day terminology.

The river which watered the Garden of Eden "went out of Eden," probably out of the country of Eden, not necessarily out of the Garden of Eden. The following statement, that it was parted into "four heads," may refer to a condition at the headwaters area, not within the garden.

In dismay at the failure to locate the garden of Adam and Eve from the description given in Genesis, many students have attempted to spiritualize the whole story. The garden was not, they say, a place on earth, but a heavenly abode, in which the drama of "the fall" was enacted. Others insist that everything in the Bible account of the Garden should be given a symbolic meaning. That is, the events recorded did not really

happen anywhere; they were invented as symbols of truth.

In short, the world's scholarship admits that it cannot answer the question, where was the Garden of Eden?

In 1831, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation designating the place called Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, as the center place of the kingdom of God on the western hemisphere. A city called Zion or the New Jerusalem would there be built. There also, the foremost temple to the Lord should be erected. From the temple in Zion the law of the Lord would issue, as the word of the Lord would come from Jerusalem. (D. & C. 57:1-3; Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2; *History of the Church*, 1:188.)

Later, the Prophet designated "Spring Hill," a hill of eminence about fifty or sixty miles north and somewhat to the east of Independence, as Adam-ondi-Ahman, ". . . the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet." (D. & C. 116.) In a revelation to the Prophet, an early event in the history of mankind, occurring near Adam-ondi-Ahman, was told:

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. (D. & C. 107:53.)

Since Adam called together seven generations of his descendants at Adam-ondi-Ahman, it can well be believed that there was his old homestead. If so, the Garden of Eden was probably not far distant, for it was the entrance at the east of the Garden which was closed against them at the time of the "fall." (Genesis 3:24.) In fact, it has been commonly understood among the Latter-day Saints, from the teachings of the Prophet, that the temple was to be built in or near the location of the Garden of Eden.

That the Prophet actually taught that the Garden of Eden was in or near Independence, Missouri, is amply testified to by many who knew and heard him. Heber C. Kimball, close associate and friend of the Prophet, said on one occasion:

The spot chosen for the Garden of Eden was Jackson County, in the state of Missouri, where Independence now stands; it was occupied in the morn of creation by Adam and his associates, who came with him for the express purpose of peopling this earth. (*Journal of Discourses*, 10:235.)

Brigham Young, also a close associate of the Prophet, testified similarly:

In the beginning, after this earth was prepared for man, the Lord commenced his work upon what is now called the American continent, where the Garden of Eden was made. In the days of Noah, in the days of the floating of the ark, he took the people to another part of the earth. (*Discourses*, p. 102.)

In conversation with Orson Hyde, on March 15, 1857, President Young said:

You have been both to Jerusalem and Zion, and seen both. I have not seen either, for I have never been in Jackson County. Now it is a pleasant thing to think of and to know where the Garden of Eden was. Did you ever think of it? I do not think many do, for in Jackson County was the Garden of Eden. Joseph has declared this, and I am as much bound to believe that as to believe that Joseph was a prophet of God. (*Journal History*, March 15, 1857.)

That is the position of the Latter-day Saints today, with respect to the much-discussed location of the Garden of Eden.

Adam, after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden, lived in the vicinity of the great Missouri and Missis-

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AS MAN EATS AND DRINKS

We believe that, in large measure, as a man eats and drinks, so is he. For food, nature has given us fruits of the sun and soil. These are priceless treasures, conducive to health of body and mind. Besides these, we need no stimulants.

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issippi rivers. As his descendants multiplied, they would naturally settle along the fertile and climatically acceptable river valleys. When the flood came in the days of Noah, the Mississippi drainage must have increased to a tremendous volume, quite in harmony with the Biblical account. Noah's ark would be floated on the mighty, rushing waters, towards the Gulf of Mexico. With favorable winds, it would cross the Atlantic to the Eastern continents. There the human race, in its second start on earth, began to multiply and fill the earth.

The location of the Garden of Eden in America, and at Independence, Missouri, clears up many a problem which the Bible account of Eden and its garden has left in the minds of students. It clears up also many a vexing historical question.—J. A. W.

ERRATA

IN paragraph 2, column 2, of the article on page 761 of *The Improvement Era* for December 1945, entitled "Who Was Melchizedek?" "Shem" should be read in place of "Seth" as follows:

"There is an old Hebrew tradition that Melchizedek was none other than Shem, the son of Noah. As far as the age of Shem is concerned, that is possible. Shem lived five hundred two years after the flood, and Abraham was born two hundred ninety-two years after the flood. Abraham, therefore, must have known Shem. However, doubt is cast upon this claim by the revealed statement that 'Melchizedek received it [the priesthood] through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah.'" (D. & C. 84:14.) —J. A. W.

UTAH'S GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

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Catholic church and the first Jewish synagogue in this part of the world. The first Catholic mass, celebrated in southern Utah by a devout priest, was held in a Mormon tabernacle and sung by a Mormon choir. Such was the attitude of the Latter-day Saints toward all real Christians who came to dwell among them.

THE best blood of the world coursed in the veins of the founders of Utah. After fifty busy, eventful, happy years of statehood, we meet in this noble house of worship this blessed evening to thank our Heavenly Father for his watchcare over those who laid the foundation of this sovereign state and brought us into full fellowship of this greatest of all nations in this land choice above all other lands. If there were time, the names of many people who were outstanding in the development of this commonwealth might be mentioned. I am sure we are all grateful to those who have preceded us who assisted in the development of civilization here to bring the state in which we live to its high position among its sister states. It is a source of pride to me that since I was a child, even while Utah was a territory, few states ranked higher in education than we did. Few states had fewer illiterates in proportion to population than did we, and we have continued to guide and teach and develop our sons and daughters until today they are known throughout the world for their accomplishments. In Dr. Thorndike's article entitled "The Source of Greatness," he places Utah twenty percent higher than Massachusetts in the number of scientists and men and women of affairs in proportion to population, and Massachusetts leads the others. These things are not an accident. God has given to us every opportunity and every blessing and offers to us now encouragement to carry on.

Approximately a hundred thousand of our sons and many daughters have evidenced their loyalty by enlisting in the armed services, and how grateful we should be that so many of them are permitted to return to their loved ones without serious impairment.

WE live in a great state. We owe a debt of gratitude to those who founded and builded it; and if we will please our Heavenly Father, we will love one another, deal kindly and fairly with all our fellows, and grow in peace and happiness as the years multiply.

As an American, I am grateful that the blood of the Pilgrim Fathers is in my veins, that those who came in the *Mayflower* bequeathed to me many of the blessings that I enjoy. I am proud of them and the fine record they made, but I am just as proud of my forebears who accepted the challenge to make their homes with God in the tops of these everlasting mountains and gave to me the wonderful opportunities and delightful companionships that have been mine.

I desire to express to all of my fellow citizens gratitude and appreciation for their fellowship extended to me. I desire to unite with you in carrying forward the standard of liberty and the blessings of civilization brought to us under the Constitution of our nation and our state, that the friendship that we now enjoy will continue and increase not only in mortality but throughout the ages of eternity. Let us continue to be real men and women, not make-believe; let us safeguard our physical bodies, our moral characters, our spiritual lives, that the greatest joy possible may be ours and be passed on to our descendants for the enrichment of their lives eternally. In this way we can demonstrate our gratitude to God and his pioneer children, who, under his guidance, founded and gave to us the state of Utah.